

# Kunoichi's Stolen Heart

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Summary: Yamada Midori was adopted into the Sanada family, after her village and parents were killed by the Oda. Now, years later, Midori was out looking for her brothers, who were at war with the Oda clan, so she too could fight by their side. Along the way, she meets a high spirited ninja, known as Kunoichi, and together they form a friendship, as they fight to take down the Oda.

## 1. Prologue Part 1

**\*\*Hey guys, welcome to my first story that I'll be posting up. First of all let me say thank you to those who read this and I really hope you enjoy reading my Samurai Warriors Fanfic. This story has three prologue's, one for each origin. This one is my OC's, Yamada Midori's origin. This is an Samurai Warriors Empires kind of story, so there won't be much of the original history.\*\***

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**\*\*Please enjoy. Arigatogozaimashita!\*\***

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><p>In the Sengoku period of Japan, the blazing hot sun was towering over a small town in Kyoto, considering that it was a late afternoon. In this small town, the people in it where going about their own business, enjoying themselves as they did. From lovers taking a nice stroll through the town, enjoying each other's company, to parents spending time with their children, going around shops of business men and women. Even the children were having fun as they played with one another, running about.<p>

Yes. Everybody was having the time of their peaceful lives, and that

included two other individuals who were walking through the crowd.

A mother, who had blue hair, which was rare to have in Japan, and gentle emerald coloured eyes, and her daughter, who too had unnatural blue hair with brown eyes, were walking, hand in hand, both each carrying a basket in their free hands full of ingredients for tonight's dinner, as they, too, enjoyed each other's company. "Mama! Mama!" the little girl called out.

Yamada Yuna looked down at her ten year old bundle of joy as she was calling out her name. She couldn't help but smile at her own daughter's smile that was big and full of life. That smile was her and her husband's pride of joy and when ever something was going bad in their world, their daughters smile seemed to shine. "What is it, Midori?"

"Can I help you make dinner tonight?" the girl called Midori asked her mother.

Hearing the request warmed Yuna's heart. Ever since Midori learned to walk and talk, the little girl always offered to help out around the house and even other people when she saw they were in need. Everyone she helped would call her an angel and when the people would tell Yuna what Midori had done, she couldn't be even more proud of her daughter. "Of course you can sweetheart. But why?"

"I want to surprise Papa and show how much I can help cook!" she exclaimed happily, her big smile never leaving her face.

Yuna chuckled at her daughters free spirit. The people in town were right, she was an angel. "I'm sure he'll be very happy to know that you helped cook for him." she said, Midori screaming with joy at the answer and the two continued their walk on towards their home.

It didn't take them long to get to their little house. Midori's excitement had gotten them there faster, and the fact that the little girl dragged her mother most of the way there was probably another reason too. Sliding the door open, they both said "We're home" in unison and Yuna slid the door closed behind her whilst Midori went in further.

Yuna went into the kitchen to set their ingredients down, while the ten year old was looking around the house, checking to see if her father was home or not. After a few minutes, Yuna heard the sound of running feet and turned to see her daughter come towards her. "Papa isn't in," she explained.

"Well why don't we start that surprise dinner then, ne?" Yuna said poking her tongue out, winking at her daughter, who's smile couldn't have gotten any wider.

"Hai!" Midori screamed, and she ran up to her mother, helping her get out the ingredients for their dinner and started to cook.

For several hours, the mother daughter pair cooked. Yuna would do all the hard parts, like cutting up the meat and vegetables, as Midori would pass her mother the things that the woman would need, peel the skin of of some onions, which would bring tears to the young girl's eyes and her mother would chuckle from the sight, earning a pout in return. And Yuna would let Midori stir the ingredients together in

the bowl, humming a tune when she did so.

As Midori continued to stir, and Yuna putting in the final features, the sound of a door sliding and a tired deep voice saying "I'm back" reached the pair's ears, the young girl being the first to react. Looking toward the sound of the voice, with a big smile, Midori stopped what she was doing and ran to the door.

"Papa! Papa!" she screamed, causing her father, Yamada Kazuhiro, to turn around, just in time to see his lively daughter coming running at him. "Welcome back!" she greeted with a smile as she grappled her father's midsection into a hug.

"Whoa!" Kazuhiro yelped, holding on to the girl's shoulders so he didn't fall on his rear. "Hahaha, where's the fire kiddo?" Kazuhiro then smelt a pleasant aroma from the house, an aroma that was sending his taste buds ablaze. He was really hungry after a busy day of work. "Mmmm, what's that smell?"

But before the man could go an investigate the amazing smell, Midori released her father's mid-section and grasped his hand instead. "This way Papa!" she said excitedly, dragging the older man to the houses living room and made him sit down on a cushion next to the low table on the tatami mat. "Wait here," she ordered before she ventured off into the kitchen.

Kazuhiro just smiled as his daughter left and did what she said. Whatever it was that was causing his girl to be this excited was probably worth the wait. It probably had something to do with the nice smell coming from the kitchen.

He didn't have to wait long however as he heard the sound of feet approach him. Turning his head, he saw his smiling bundle of joy and the love of his life coming into the living area, trays in hand with what seemed to be bowls of food. \_So that's what the nice smell was\_ Kazuhiro thought.

"Welcome home, darling," Yuna greeted her husband with a smile. A smile he loved dearly. She and Midori laid down the wooden trays of food on the table, and then the little girl rushed back off into the kitchen to get the last wooden tray that was left behind. While Midori was away, Yuna took this opportunity to sit next to her husband. "Kazuhiro..." she called him in a sweet voice. The man turned his gaze from the kitchen, where his little girl went through, to his wife and was about to answer but stopped short when Yuna cupped his cheek and pressed her lips to his into a soft, gentle kiss full of love.

Kazuhiro was surprised for a little bit at first but that surprise quickly disappeared and he kissed back with the same gentleness his wife was giving him. When they were slightly younger, Kazuhiro would normally initiate this sort of act and right now he couldn't describe how happy he was knowing the fact his use-to-be shy wife had started this lovely contact.

When they pulled away from the kiss, Yuna put her forehead on Kazuhiro's shoulder and sighed in relief. "I've missed you," she said in a whisper.

Kazuhiro looked at his wife with gentle eyes and wrapped his arm

around her waist, pressing her close. "I know what you mean," he said. "If I could stay home with you everyday and get paid for it, I'd do it in a heartbeat." Saying that earned a chuckle from his wife and then the sound of feet could be heard. The couple pulled apart from one another when Midori returned to the room, tray in hand and sat down at the table. Yuna then sat up in her own seat and Kazuhiro did the same and looked at the meal in front of him.

On his tray, there was a bowl that had meat and potatoes in with a few vegetables inside, a bowl of miso soup, a piece of cooked fish, a plate of salad on the side and big bowl of rice that was in between the three of them. The girl's had similar things on their trays, and with a "Itadakimasu" from all three of them, Kazuhiro started to eat. Grabbing his chopsticks, he took a piece of meat and potato with a bit of vegetables and put it in his mouth, closed his eyes and chewed, savouring the taste.

Midori, and even Yuna, didn't take a bite as they waited to see the older man's reaction. Suddenly, Kazuhiro opened his eyes wide like saucers and exclaimed, "Delicious!" which made Midori extremely happy and Yuna smile.

"It's thanks to Midori that it tastes that good," Yuna told him, and the younger girl blush from the compliment.

"Then no wonder it tastes this good," he spoke with a smile on his face, he then gazed at the blushing Midori. "Was this why you were so excited?" When the blushing girl nodded, Kazuhiro's heart felt warm. How was he blessed with a girl so pure hearted? Kazuhiro then leaned over and reached out with his hand, petting the the girl's head. "Thank you very much, Midori," he said and Midori looked back at him with a big smile.

"Right then," he started returning to his seat, "we'd best not let this food go to waste. Let's dig in." Saying those words everyone finally started to eat their meal.

They talked. About how Kazuhiro's day at the blacksmiths was and how he was able to create a few weapons which earned him a decent amount of money. About the girl's day and how they were busy getting the ingredients for dinner. Yuna even told Kazuhiro how Midori help some of the people in town, which earned the young girl another blush and another pat on the head.

This was the time of day that the Yamada family loved. Talking, sitting together for dinner, having fun with one another. And neither of them would change it for anything.

\* \* \*

><p>"Phewwww!" Kazuhiro let out a satisfied sigh, patting his stomach, "I'm stuffed. That was the best meal I've had after a long day." Yuna covered her mouth with her hand, chuckling underneath it at Kazuhiro.<p>

"I'm glad you liked it Papa," Midori said, the smile on her face said it all: happiness. She felt proud that the meal she helped make satisfied her father.

"Of course," he started. "That's because-" he reached out his left

hand towards Yuna and his right toward Midori, "-it was made by two wonderful girl's that any husband and father could ever dream of," Yuna took Kazuhiro's extended left hand with her own, Midori did the same with his other one and Kazuhiro rubbed his thumbs on each hand over the top of their joined hands. "And I'm glad that I was the lucky person to have you two."

Yuna and Midori both squeezed the older man's hands, showing that they too felt the same.

However the family moment only lasted a moment.

All three of them heard the sound of horses coming from outside, and Kazuhiro furrowed his brow, wondering what the noise was about. He released his families' hands and stood up. For some reason, he had a bad feeling about what was going on outside. "Darling," his wife spoke up, turning his gaze to his wife. He could see the worry in her eyes and he knew that he wasn't the only one who had the bad feeling.

"Stay with Midori," he told her and then moved away from the table and headed to the front door.

"Papa...?" Midori called out to him but he didn't stop, and with the sound of the door sliding open and then closed, Kazuhiro was out of the house. "Papa, wait!" Midori screamed out her fathers name and was about to stand up but a pair of hands held her where she was. Looking, she saw her mother looking at her with gentle eyes, telling her that everything would be all right. But for some reason, she felt like something was going to happen. She felt like that she was never going to see her father again and the thought scared her.

"Mama, we have to go after Papa!"

Yuna looked at her daughter's worried eyes and she could see the fear in them. It looked like she and Kazuhiro weren't the only ones that had the bad feeling. "Midori..." But looking into those eyes, she was torn. Yuna too wanted to see what was happening and wanted to make sure Kazuhiro was alright.

"Papa..." Midori pleaded.

That got Yuna. Closing her eyes and giving out a sigh she looked back into Midori's eyes. "All right..." she said. "But you have to promise me that you'll stay close to me?" Midori nodded at her mother's words and Yuna mentally apologised to Kazuhiro before taking her daughter's hand. Both heading outside to see what was going on.

\* \* \*

><p>When pair of girls got outside, the first thing Yuna noticed was that the people from their town where standing outside their doors, probably wondering, too, what was going outside. Her gaze then fell upon to what was in front of her. There were soldiers that were on horseback, which was what the sound of horses came from before, and there were some more soldiers standing behind the ones on horseback.<p>

And standing in front of them, was one man.

\_Kazuhiro!?!\_ Yuna exclaimed in her thoughts. The love of her life was standing in front of the heavily armed men, all by himself, his hands clenched into fists. From where Yuna was standing, she could just about hear the conversation that he and the men were having.

"What is it you're doing here!?" Kazuhiro spoke to them, anger clear in his voice. Yuna had never seen or heard her husband sound this mad before, not since they were younger, when Yuna was attacked by some man passing on the paths in town. Kazuhiro had beaten the man, telling him to apologise to Yuna and the man ran away. Now, he was angry once more, which meant that this situation wasn't good either. "What is it you want from this town!?"

"Hmph," one of the men on horseback grunted. If Yuna had to guess he must have to be the leader of the group of soldiers. The young mother felt her lower part of her kimono being squeezed and when she looked down, she saw Midori. The girl looked scared, and who could blame her. And if Yuna was honest, she was too.

The man on horseback looked up, ignoring Kazuhiro completely and started to announce to the people who were standing in front of their homes. "Listen up you peasants!" the man's voice boomed. "From this day onward, this town will be under the rule of Nobunaga-sama," he declared. Everyone in the town either gasped from what he said, or they started to talk to someone next to them. The leader of the group grinned, he was hoping for this kind of reaction. He decided to add a bit more fear into them. "Anyone that dares to oppose will-"

"Never!"

Everybody's eyes turned to Kazuhiro, who had stopped the general's speech mid-way. "We'll never bow down to that tyrant you call a lord!" Kazuhiro himself declared. "So go back now and tell Nobunaga that we will not yield!"

Hearing the heroic speech Kazuhiro gave out some of the people, mostly men, started to cheer. They all agreed whole heartedly but Kazuhiro refused to take his eyes off the men in front of him.

Yuna felt pride rise from within her chest. Even though he was completely out numbered, he was still standing his ground and he was able to boost everybody else's morale as well. And Midori couldn't help but be in awe of her father. In her eyes, he was brave. She knew that he could do anything and the little girl was extremely happy. Happy that he would make these bad men go away. He would-

\_BANG!\_

Everything went quiet. Deathly quiet. The sound of a rifle shot had stopped the noise that been building up from the crowd of people. Instead everyone, in the entire town, had their eyes open up wide, wider than they thought possible. Even Yuna's looked like they would come from her sockets.

Kazuhiro, too, had his eyes nearly coming out from their sockets. He slowly looked down upon himself, and there, on his yukata, was a small hole which slowly started to dye red. The red then started to spread, getting bigger and Kazuhiro felt strange. His body that was

warm suddenly grew cold, like he had been suddenly struck by a blizzard. The man looked back up and then noticed that one of the soldiers had a rifle in his hands, aimed toward him and smoke coming from inside the barrel.

That's when he realised. He had been shot. Coming to that realization, the fact that he was shot and most likely dying, he slowly turned his head around to look behind him. There stood his wife and child, both looking at him with horror in their eyes. He was scared. Not just the way they looked now, but he knew that this was the last time he would be able to see them.

Kazuhiro could feel blood starting to fill his lungs, and the taste of copper filled his mouth also, blood trickling from his chin. His eyes then went gentle. If this was the last time he would see his family, then he wouldn't want his family to see his horror stricken face. Thinking that, with his gentle eyes, he smiled. Kindly.

Yuna's chest tightened when she saw the smile on his face. She knew he was forcing that smile, trying assure her that everything was fine. But she knew that it was far from it. Her eyes begun to sting, as the tears started to flow down her cheeks. Kazuhiro opened his mouth to speak, and even though they were from a far distance from one another, she could still hear his final words. "Run..." was all he said, before the light in his eyes, that was hopelessly clinging on, became dull, and Kazuhiro fell to the ground like a ton of bricks.

"Pa...pa..." Midori called his name slowly, her brain trying to catch up on everything that had happened. One moment, her father was standing there, being brave and standing up against the soldiers and then, aloud noise goes off and everything was silent. The next moment, her father looks at her and her mother, red blood seeping from the hole in his chest and from his mouth. He gave them both a smile, a kind one and tells them something, which Midori couldn't quite hear, before his eye's light faded and hit the ground. His body unmoving.

Even if she was still young, she knew what had happened to her father. Kazuhiro was dead. Her father had died and left this world without her and her mother. "No..." she looked at the body that once housed her father's soul, "...no..." Everyone started to scream and run for their lives. But Midori continued to stare at her dead father, "...no..." The soldiers had all raised their weapons, their general telling them to kill everyone in the town, but Midori still continued to stare at the corpse on the ground.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Hearing her daughter's scream, Yuna was brought back to the land of the living. Unfortunately she didn't have time to mourn Kazuhiro. She had to get Midori away from here, as far as possible. As men, women and even children were being killed before her, Yuna gripped her child's hand, and started to run toward the woods that were behind their house. The screams of everyone following them. Screams that could never be forgotten.

\* \* \*

><p>They ran. Even when they tripped and fell, they ran. It was the only thing they could do. What they had to do.<p>

"Over there! They're getting away!"

Yuna could hear the sound of the soldiers behind them. They were slowly making their way toward the mother daughter pair. Yuna's lungs were on fire, her legs were starting to ache from running so much, and she was finding very difficult to breathe, but she had to keep going. She refused to let anything happen to Midori.

"Ma...ma..." Midori called her mother in between breaths. "I... can't run... anymore..."

"Keep going... Midori..." Yuna tried to encourage her, refusing to look at her daughter. If she looked at her now and see the agony that she was in, Yuna's chest would tighten even further. And right now, she needed all the oxygen she could get to keep going.

\_BANG!\_

The sound of gunfire could suddenly be heard and after it, the trees that the two go past suddenly explode, fragments of wood hitting their bodies. But she still didn't stop. She had to keep going! She had to keep Midori safe! She had to-

\_BANG!\_

"Ugh!" Yuna grunted, falling to the ground. One of the soldier's bullets had managed to hit the young mother in the shoulder, and she made sure to let go of Midori so she didn't fall over too. Realizing that her mother had fallen, Midori quickly ran back to her and tried to pick her up.

"Come on, Mama!" she cried, pleading. She grabbed her mother's arm and tried to pull her up. But it was pointless. Midori didn't have the strength to pick Yuna up. And if Yuna was honest with herself, there was no way for them to escape.

Not together at least.

The young mother could feel the soldiers getting closer and closer by the minute, and with her shoulder injury she wouldn't last long. I guess it's the only way she thought. If she could get Midori to escape, then she would have a peace of mind.

Somehow managing to stand up, with a little help from her daughter, Yuna took her daughter to a nearby thick tree. It looked big enough to conceal a small person easily. Behind the tree, Yuna bent down to Midori's level, holding the younger girl's shoulders so she would look at her. "Midori," she called her, "I want you to listen to me carefully."

"W-what is it Mama?" Midori asked worriedly. She didn't like where this was going.

Yuna took a deep breath. "I want you to stay here for me okay," she told her.

"H-huh...?"



To see her daughter looking like she was being abandoned, broke Yuna's heart. But she had no choice. If Midori was going to hate her later on, she would be able to live with that. As long as she was safe then that was all that mattered. Leaning forward, Yuna pressed her lips to her daughter's forehead. "Ma...ma..." She heard her name being called again, this time it was a voice on the verge of crying. Moving her head back, she looked into her daughter's eyes, and cupped her cheek.

"I love you Midori," she said in her gentle voice. She tried her best to stop the tears from coming, but before she knew, they had started to fall, one by one. She gently placed her forehead on her daughter's and closed her eyes. "And I always will..."

Quickly, before she could even change her mind, Yuna stood up and ran into another direction. She didn't look back as she ran. Knowing she would go back if she did. When Midori shouted her name, Yuna ignored it and tried her best to get distance between them. \_I'm so sorry Midori\_ she apologised in her thoughts, the sound of footsteps inching closer. \_Be safe, my little angel...\_

\_BANG!\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>BANG!<em>

Midori's body stiffened when she heard a gun shot. It came from the direction where her mother had ran, and she was starting to get scared. She wondered if she was ever going to see her mother again, but quickly shook that thought out of her mind. \_No. Mama will come back for me. So I'll just be a good girl and wait\_ she thought, trying to keep her spirits up, but the sound of a twig breaking made Midori's heart nearly stop.

She started to shake uncontrollably, but tried her best to stay still, her back pressed tightly against the tree. She knew she shouldn't. She knew it was stupid. But she did it anyway. Midori popped her head out from the tree. Her eyes scanned the area. There was nothing in her field of vision and she breathed out a breath she herself didn't realize that she was holding in. When she saw that no one was there, Midori was about to go back to where she was until-

\_SNAP!\_

-the sound of twigs breaking came from behind her. Her eyes widened in fear and Midori whipped her head around. From the corner of her eye, she saw someone in armor, similar to the soldiers that were in her village and she ducked just in time, as a samurai sword was swung, hitting the bark of the tree, where she was standing just a moment ago.

The little girl began to run. She ran for her life. She could hear the sound of the soldier removing his sword from the tree and shouting, "Get back here you little bitch!" as he started to chase her further into the woods.

She didn't know how long she ran for, or any idea where she was

going, but she didn't care at the moment. The soldier behind her was getting closer behind her, and all that was going through her mind was that she was going to be killed.

Killed just like the people in her village. Just like her father. And even possibly... like her mother.

After a few more minutes of running, or for hours in Midori's case, the little girl came to an abrupt stop. She was now on the edge of a cliff, and the sound of a waterfall was coming on her left. The blue haired girl slowly moved forward and looked over the cliff's edge, being careful not to fall over. From her point of view it looked to be long drop, the water at the bottom looked deep and the rushing water of the waterfall made so if anyone would go into it, they would be engulfed instantly.

Midori turned around when she heard the sound of footsteps, and saw the Oda soldier standing there with his sword drawn. "Nowhere to run now," he said taking a step closer, in response, Midori took a step back. When he took another step, so did the little girl and kept doing that until Midori was at the cliff's edge. The soldier smiled wickedly, seeing the girl had nowhere to go. He raised his katana above him, screaming, "Dieee!" before swinging down his sword upon the blue haired girl.

With wide eyes filled with tears, Midori instinctively took a step back. But she then realized there was nothing there to stand on, by then however it was too late. With nothing to support the foot that she used, Midori started to fall backwards. The sword swing missed Midori about an inch, and the little girl fell off the cliff, her screams muffled by the sound of the waterfall and she crashed into the cold, deep water.

When her body was engulfed by the rushing water, Midori was soon pulled away by it, to where, she had no idea. The last thing she saw was the blue water surrounding her, before her eyes started to grow heavy. And soon only darkness filled her vision.

\_Mama. Papa.\_

## 2. Prologue Part 2

Hey. Part 2 of the prologue is the Sanada and Ina origin story. I hope you enjoy.

\* \* \*

><p>Underneath a cherry blossom tree, as the sun was starting to take that evening glow, there were two brothers and a girl. The two brothers, Sanada Yukimura and Nobuyuki, were facing each other in fighting stances, a wooden jumonji-yari in their hands, their eyes never leaving the other's.<p>

The girl, Ina, that was with the brothers, was sitting on a small rock with her legs cross-legged and was really looking forward to the brother's little match. When it always came to Nobuyuki, Ina would go to the ends of the earth for him. Before she knew it, the little crush she had when they were kids had soon blossomed into love. The teenage girl left her day dream as the two brothers started to

converse, and Ina didn't want to miss any details.

"Are you ready, Yukimura?" Nobuyuki asked his younger brother, a small smile appearing on his face as he tightened the grip of his weapon. Yukimura, too, smiled and from the looks of it he tightened the grip of his weapon as well.

"You bet Nii-san!" the younger Sanada shouted. With that, their match had begun, both brothers getting ready to strike. However just as Yukimura was about to make the first move of the sparring match, Ina's voice screaming out, "Good luck Nobuyuki!" had made him stop for a moment and looked at her in annoyance. "Oi, Ina! Don't just suddenly shout like that, you'll-" Before he could finish his sentence, Yukimura felt a presence next to him, and with a quick glance to his side, the younger brother saw a wooden jumonji-yari being thrust toward him.

At the last moment, Yukimura managed to bring up his own wooden weapon and block the three wooded tip with the polearm of his own wooden jumonji-yari . "You shouldn't look away from your opponent, Yukimura," Nobuyuki said, pushing in the deadlock that had been formed.

"It's not my fault!" Yukimura complained through clenched teeth, trying to stop himself from being pushed back by his brother. "If Ina hadn't of shouted out loud," he spoke and risked a quick glance to their female childhood friend. The brown haired girl smiled and had her tongue sticking out. She shouted on purpose!

When Yukimura was distracted once more, Nobuyuki used this oppotunity to his advantage. Pushing his younger brother's wooden jumonji-yari to the side, Yukimura stumbled. Then with a quick vertical swing, he knocked the jumonji-yari out of his hands and roundhouse kicked his younger brother in the chest, lightly so he wouldn't wind him too much. Yukimura then fell on his rear end on the grass, an "Ow" was muttered under his breath and he looked up, only to meet the tip of Nobuyuki's weapon.

"You get distracted too easily, Yukimura," Nobuyuki said scoldingly, but then smiled and offered the younger Sanada his hand. Yukimura sighed outloud, but he too smiled back and took the offered hand. "You should really work on that," he told him. Yukimura in return just crossed his arms in front of his chest, looked away from Nobuyuki and pouted.

"Nobuyuki!" Ina came running to the brothers, or more specifically to Nobuyuki, and smiled from ear to ear. "Good work, Nobuyuki. I knew you could do it!" Ina then turned toward Yukimura's direction, who was still pouting. "You tried your best too Yuki-chan but it was obvious that Nobuyuki would win."

When he heard the nickname, Yukimura's head turned toward Ina's direction so fast, it was surprising that he didn't get whiplash. "Oi Ina, stop calling me by that nickname! I'm not a kid anymore!"

"Don't mind, don't mind," Ina said, waving her hand dismissively. It was so easy to tease the younger of the Sanada brothers, as he would get riled up fast. It was extremely fun however, that Ina couldn't help herself saying, "But in the eyes of an adult, aren't you still

classed as a child?" and then finished off with,  
"Yu-ki-chan."

"Oi!"

With Yukimura's outburst and his cheeks turning the shade of red, Ina couldn't help laughing out loud. Nobuyuki just sighed, a hand on his hip, as he watched his brother have a one-sided argument with his childhood friend, who still continued to laugh. But deep down, the silver haired boy was smiling inside. Even though Yukimura would argue with Ina, and Ina would tease Yukimura, Nobuyuki knew their was no harsh intents. They might not show it, but they do care for one another, as does the silver haired teen. \_I wish this could last forever\_ he thought to himself as he watched the two.

Soon, the excitement started to calm down. Ina had finally stopped laughing her heart out, and tried to breathe, wiping the tears that had come out from her fit of laughter with her finger. Yukimura just stood to the side, his arms crossed once more and pouted. Ina had to admit, even though she loved Nobuyuki, she couldn't help find Yukimura cute. But she wouldn't dare say that out loud. If he didn't like being called by a nickname, he wouldn't take being called cute.

When Ina had calmed down completely, she walked up to the embarrassed head-banded boy and called out to him in a gentle voice. "Sorry Yukimura," she apologised, looking at Yukimura with honest, gentle eyes. Yukimura's gaze turned to Ina's, and even a hot headed boy like him knew that she was sincere.

The brown haired boy sighed in defeat and smiled at Ina. "Alright, alright," he said, "I accept your apology."

"Hehe," Ina smiled, mischievously after he said the words she hoped.  
"Thanks, Yuki-chan!"

"Oi!"

Nobuyuki sighed once more before stepping forward. Even he could see that this was going to go on forever if nobody would stop it. "Okay that's enough. Ina you've had your fun," Nobuyuki lightly scolding her. Ina rubbed the back of her neck and smiled awkwardly.

"Sorry Nobuyuki," Ina apologised.

The silver haired boy then turned his sights on his younger brother, who wouldn't look him in the eye. "You shouldn't get riled up so easily Yukimura," he told him but Yukimura continued to not meet his gaze. He would always do that whenever he got scolded and knew he did wrong "Just... try and work on it. Okay?" He finished with a small smile, Yukimura turning his eyes to look at Nobuyuki before nodding his head.

"Hai, Nii-san," he spoke.

"It's fine," said Nobuyuki. "As long as you understand. Now then, I don't know about you two, but I'm getting a bit hungry. What say we go freshen up near the stream and head on home?" Nobuyuki suggested, getting a response from Ina straight away, saying "I will!" very enthusiastically and for Yukimura, he simply nodded his

agreement.

With that, Nobuyuki turned around and started to walk off, Ina following him closely behind and Yukimura, too, following them but remaining silent.

\* \* \*

><p>It was about a ten minute walk to get to the stream which wasn't far from their home. When Ina saw the stream, she bolted toward it, getting there first. Getting down on her knees, the girl cupped her hands together and put them into the cold, flowing water. When she got enough in her hands, she then brought it up to her lips and drank, welcoming the cold liquid going down her throat.<p>

"So good," Ina sighed in relief. By then both the Sanada brothers were by her side and decided to do the same. Nobuyuki was bent down on one knee and cupped the water with one hand. In that hand, the silver haired Sanada had managed to get a good amount of water before bringing it up to his mouth to drink. Ina's heart sped up slightly at how graceful Nobuyuki looked. If she didn't know him since they were children, she would easily mistake him for a noble.

Next to him, Yukimura was the exact opposite of his brother. Getting on his hands and knees, the younger Sanada dipped his head into the water, drinking the stream's flow. Once he had his fill, his head came shooting out of the water, droplets going back to it's original source and the ground he was laying upon. His face, bangs and even the front of his headband were soaking wet, but he had a satisfied smile on his face instead of the brooding one he had only a moment ago.

Before Ina decided to tell Yukimura not to drink like an animal, something from the corner of her eye caught her attention. Further down the stream, something, or by the looks of the shape, someone, was stuck beside a rock. Half of their body was still in the water, but what got Ina was that the figure wasn't moving.

"Hey guys," Ina called out to the brothers. She could tell they were listening as she felt their gazes on her back. "What's that over there?" she asked, pointing to what she was seeing.

Looking in the direction that Ina was pointing at, the Sanada brothers, too, saw that something was resting against the rock. "I don't know," Nobuyuki said, standing up. The other two followed suit and with curiosity coming from all of them, they walked along the path next to the stream to get a better look at what it was.

As the trio got closer and closer, the figure got clearer. When they were close enough, Ina's suspicions were right. It was someone and not just anybody. It was a little girl, unconscious by the looks of it and she was subconsciously holding on to the rock.

"Oh god..." Ina spoke, her hands covering her mouth, her eyes wide in horror. The water's flow wasn't going that fast, but by the looks of the girl's body, the water speed now would be enough to send her underwater. "What should we do Nobuyuki?!"

The silver haired boy furrowed his brows and narrowed his eyes, thinking. The water looked quite deep, and the water flow was fast as

well. If they weren't prepared, they too could get swallowed up by the water's current. Nobuyuki and Ina started see the girl's grip slipping and whatever they had to do, they had to do it fast.

But before Nobuyuki could think of anything, the boy heard fast footsteps and a flash of red ran past him.

"There ain't no time to think!" Yukimura shouted, diving into the water without missing a beat.

"Yukimura!"

"Yuki-chan!"

Nobuyuki and Ina cried out to the brown haired boy just before his head hit the water. As soon as he dove in, Yukimura came back up for air and then started to swim toward the girl. Thanks to the water current, it was a bit difficult getting to the rock, the water pushing him sometimes into the other direction, but his perseverance refused to let the water drag him down.

When he finally got to the rock, he gripped it himself, having a few seconds to get his breath back before he continued the task at hand. Making sure he was secured against the rock so he wouldn't move away, Yukimura gripped one of the girl's wrists and pulled her on to his back, grabbing the other girl's wrist and wrapping the other hand around the other girl's hand. Once her knew that the girl was secure enough, Yukimura swam back to the side where Nobuyuki and Ina were standing.

Yukimura reached out a hand, to which Nobuyuki quickly took and started to pull his brother out from the water. Ina, too, helped get Yukimura out and once he was half-way, she reached for the girl on his back and pulled her off of him, taking off the extra weight so Yukimura could get out faster.

Now out of the water, Yukimura started to breathe heavily, some water coming out from his mouth which he accidentally swallowed. Nobuyuki, too, started to breathe a bit raggedly as he fell on the ground. When the silver haired boy managed to catch back some of his breath, he looked toward Yukimura. "Don't ever... do something like... that again without... thinking..." he said in between breaths.

Yukimura just laughed as he tried to gain his breath back. "Sorry Nii-san," Yukimura said, smiling as he apologised. Nobuyuki knew he wasn't that sorry, to which he just sighed.

"Nobuyuki! Yukimura!"

The Sanada brothers looked toward a distressed Ina. The brunette had the girl they saved laying on her lap, and the said girl wasn't moving. Terror struck the two boys as they both shot up and ran toward the pair of girls.

"S-She isn't breathing," Ina said, tears starting to fall from her eyes. For the brothers, it was very rare to see their childhood friend cry, and when she did they knew that it was serious. And now was one of those times.

When the brothers got to the ponytailed girl, Nobuyuki told her to

put the other girl on the ground, to which she complied. The silver haired boy knelt next to the girl and bent down, his ear pressing against the girl's chest. For a few seconds, Nobuyuki just listened.

Faintly, oh so faintly, he could hear the girl's heart beating, but it was slowly starting to decrease.

Moving his head away, the silver haired Sanada put both of his hands, his palms facing forward, on to the girl's chest and started to perform CPR. After pumping the girl for a few more seconds, Nobuyuki opened up the girl's mouth, pinched her nose, and pressed his mouth against hers, blowing his own breath into the girl's lungs. Once he couldn't blow any more, he removed his mouth from the girl's and began to pump on her chest some more.

\_ 'Come on!' \_ Nobuyuki said in his thoughts. He then started to repeat what he did a moment ago for a second attempt. When Nobuyuki came to his third attempt, Ina couldn't bear to watch anymore. She had never seen anyone die before, even in front of her, and she decided to embrace Yukimura next to her, wrapping her arms around his neck and putting her face on his shoulder. The brown haired boy also wrapped an arm around the brunette, hearing the contained sobs coming from the younger girl, their argument from before completely forgotten about.

Nobuyuki was now on his fifth attempt, and by the looks of it the girl didn't look like she was going to wake up. Even the silver haired boy thought that it was hopeless and was going to stop what he was going to do.

That was until the girl coughed, water coming out from her mouth and Nobuyuki quickly turned the girl to her side so she wouldn't choke. Hearing what was going on, Ina lifted her head from the younger Sanada's shoulder and relief had washed over her, tears that were once sad, were now happy. "I'm so glad," she said in a whisper.

After her coughing fit, the girl was unconscious once more. But that didn't matter to the three teens as Nobuyuki let out long sigh and Ina was now hugging Yukimura tightly in excitement, the brown haired boy hugging back just as tightly.

Once they knew that the little girl was safe and the adrenaline had finally left their systems, there was now the one question that hung between the three teenagers. What should they do now? When Yukimura asked that question, Ina spoke up, the pair having left the embrace a while ago. "We can't just leave her here."

"But we can't exactly take her back with us," Yukimura countered. "What if her parents are looking for her right now? We should go and see if we can find them."

"It's almost getting dark Yukimura," Ina said, and she was right. Thanks to all the excitement of rescuing the girl, the sun had started to set beyond the horizon, night drawing near. "It'll be too dangerous to go and look for them at night. Especially with no light to guide us! Baka!"

"Baka?!"

"In any case," Nobuyuki interrupted, knowing that these two would just keep going back and forth, and they wouldn't be getting anywhere at this rate. "We will take her back home with us and treat her there."

"Nii-san!" Yukimura called out to his brother.

"Ina's right Yukimura, we cannot just leave her here," the silver haired Sanada explained. "Unless you just want to abandon this girl here and let the wolves have their next meal?" Yukimura's eyes widened in horror and then he looked down, guilt written all over his features. Nobuyuki smiled gently at him though. He knew that he was just scared at the moment and didn't mean any of the words he was saying.

"Now then," Nobuyuki spoke up, tucking his arms underneath the girl's shoulder and legs, bringing her into a princess carry. "Let's take her back home. She'll catch a cold at this rate and I don't want her to go dying after we'd just saved her. Right?" Nobuyuki said, adding a bit of humour to cheer the two other teens up. It worked however, and his brother and childhood friend both nodded in agreement.

Now the three of them, plus a fourth member, headed back to their village, all of them wondering how they were going to explain what had happened.

\* \* \*

><p>As they were making their way to the Sanada residence, people, along the way, gave a curious glance, wondering why the trio had a little girl in the state she was in. They chose ignore them however and when they were in front of the house, Ina opened the sliding door for Nobuyuki. Giving his thanks, he stepped into the household shouting, "Oto-san! Oka-san!" before heading to the living area.<p>

"I'll get the futon," Ina told him and then left to get the thin mattress.

As she left, Sanada Masayuki and his wife, Sanada Yamate, came into the living area, wondering what got their children in such a fuss. When they saw the girl in Nobuyuki's arms, Yamate put a hand to her mouth and walked closer. "What happened," she asked, cupping the girl's cheek and stroking the skin with her thumb. That's when she noticed that the girl had a few scratches on her face.

"We found her in the stream, in the forest, near the cherry blossom tree," Nobuyuki replied to his mother. Ina at that point came back with the futon, along with a towel, a blanket and a change of clothes. "Yukimura managed to rescue her from it," he said, motioning to the still drenched brown haired boy.

Once Ina had finished setting up the futon, Nobuyuki put the unnatural bluenette down in a sitting position, his hand still supporting the girl's shoulders, before the silver haired boy's mother switched places with Nobuyuki. "Ina-chan," she called, the ponytailed girl now sitting in front of her and the girl. "Could you help me get her changed?"



Ina replied with a "Hai" and with that, Masayuki stepped up and said, "Yukimura, why don't you go to your room, get yourself dried and changed?"

The brown haired boy looked at his father quizzically, and tilted his head. "But won't they need help with her?" he asked, motioning to his mother and the bluenette.

With that reply Nobuyuki and his father just sighed. Yukimura had a good heart, everyone in the household knew that, but he was completely oblivious when it came to women and their need for privacy. But just before the boy's father or brother could say anything, Ina decided to give out a comment of her own, saying, "Yuki-chan is a pervert," which ended up with Yukimura twisting his head to the brunette, his cheeks instantly becoming inflamed.

"Pervert?!"

Nobuyuki, however interrupted them before it could escalate any further. "Just go and get yourself cleaned up, Yukimura," he said. The young Sanada looked at his brother, and then bore the face of defeat before he left the room, wondering what he had even done to deserve that.

When his youngest son left, Masayuki turned to his wife. "Nobuyuki and I will go and finish up dinner," he said. "You just make sure the girl is all right."

"Thank you darling," Yamate said, giving her husband a kind smile which Masayuki returned and left with the silver haired boy in tow.

Before Nobuyuki left, the older Sanada brother turned back to the two women, looking at Ina specifically. "Take care of her Ina," said Nobuyuki, Ina now looking into his gentle pools of grey. "I believe in you."

With those words coming out from his mouth, Ina could feel her cheeks starting to grow hot and her heart started to beat a little faster when she saw her crush smile at her, before leaving. \_'Nobuyuki'\_ Ina called out his name in her thoughts. With Nobuyuki's encouragement in her, Ina was determined more than ever to make sure this girl was all right.

"Ara, ara, young love these days is so cute."

That comment broke Ina out of her daze and looked at Sanada mother. "Huh?" Ina responded with a noise. When her brain finally caught up with what the older woman said however, Ina cheeks became scorching hot. She began to stammer, trying to say that it wasn't anything like that, but thankfully the mother of the Sanada brothers raised her hand and stopped the poor girl, smiling.

"It's all right Ina-chan, you don't have to explain," she said. Ina let out a sigh of defeat and looked down, but a hand on her shoulder made the young girl look back up, staring into Yamate's gentle pools. "I just want to let you know that you have mine and Masayuki's approval. Please, take care of him."

Ina's eyes widened for a moment, before a smile crept on her face, that too, spreading widely. With an enthusiastic "Hai!" and another smile from Yamate, who Ina could hopefully call 'mother' one day, the two women finally started their task of taking care of the girl before them.

\* \* \*

><p>Nightmares.<p>

An unpleasant dream which causes a strong emotional response from the mind, typically fear but also despair, anxiety and great sadness for the sleeper. The sleeper's dream may contain situations of discomfort, psychological or physical terror.

And for Ina, that was what she was seeing right now as she watched the girl slept.

\_Several hours later, after the brunette had finished dinner with the Sanada family, Ina decided to pay a visit to the girl they rescued, bringing her some soup to eat if she was awake. But when she got to the closed sliding door, she could hear sound of crying and thrashing. \_

\_Worried, Ina quickly slid the door open and laying there, the blue haired girl was twisting and turning in her futon, crying out with tears in her eyes, "Papa! Mama!" over and over again. Rushing to the girl's side, Ina sat down and put the tray of food to the side.

\_

\_The brunette's maternal instincts suddenly kicked in, and she lifted the girl's upper body close to her's and embraced her. The girl instantly gripped the front of Ina's kimono and sobbed, still repeating the same two words, like a mantra and the older girl's heart broke seeing this. What happened to you? Ina thought to herself, as the girl in her arms had finally calmed down. Looking down, she saw that the girl had cried herself to slumber once more and Ina's thoughts wandered.\_

\_What had happened to this girl to make her react in such away?\_

\_As she thought that, the sound of footsteps could be heard behind her and when she looked, the entire Sanada family were standing there in the door way. She knew that they had come to find out what the noise was all about, and when they saw what was going on they remained quiet. \_

Subconsciously, Ina reached over to the girl's face and brushed her bangs to one side and cupped her cheek, brushing her thumb over the girl's tear stained skin. When she did, the girl would relax, and would sleep comfortable once more. That was all Ina could do however, and for some reason, that made her completely powerless.

The brunette then felt a sudden presence in the room with her and from the corner of her eyes saw a flash of silver. "How is she doing?" Nobuyuki asked, sitting himself down next to the brunette.

"She's fine," Ina replied, removing her hand from the bluenette's cheek. "For now."

There was silence between the two childhood friends as they watched the figure of the sleeping girl. But the silence didn't last long, as the ponytailed brunette felt an arm wrap around her shoulder and when she turned her gaze to Nobuyuki's, he, too, was gazing at her with those gentle silver eyes that she loved. "You have done the best you can, Ina."

The brunette lowered her gaze, looking back to the girl that was, now, sleeping soundly in the futon, before she leaned her head against the silver haired boy's shoulder. Nobuyuki didn't push her away, which Ina was thankful for, and instead pulled her in closer.

Again, silence started to take over the room, a very comfortable silence. The only sound was coming from the girl's even breaths of sleep. And her stirring. \_'Wait, stirring?\_' When Ina looked back at the girl, she saw that the bluenette's eyes were slowly starting to open.

"Where... am..." was all the girl whispered as she looked around her environment. Then soon after, her eyes shot wide open, in fear, terror, all horrible emotions that a little girl her age shouldn't have. "Mama! Papa!" the bluenette cried and that sent Ina over the edge.

Her maternal instincts acting up once more, Ina left Nobuyuki's embrace and went to the girl's side, like she was her own flesh and blood. "Hey," Ina called out gently, the girl's fearful, and now tearful, eyes looking at her. Looking into those eyes now, brown coloured eyes that she just found out, Ina really felt powerless now. The ponytailed girl put a gentle hand on the girl's shoulders, hoping that the action would tell her that she had nothing to fear from her. "You're safe now. What's your name?"

"M-Midori. Yamada Midori," the girl replied back. "Where's Papa and Mama?" she then asked, tears starting to pool and fall. Ina turned her head to look at the silver haired Sanada, lost at what she should say or do. He too had a pained expression on his face. She couldn't blame him though. But the girl spoke up once more, causing the brunette to look into those eyes once more. "Papa... Mama... are gone."

At that little declaration, Ina's and Nobuyuki's eyes widen in shock. "I-I'm sure they're fine," Ina said, trying to comfort the girl but even she knew that she was failing miserably. "I'm sure they're looking for you right-"

"They're not!" the little girl known as Midori shouted out, tears falling freely down her face. Her head was low, her eyes were closed shut and her hands were wrapped into fists, scrunching up the blankets. "Papa was shot by bad men! And Mama lured the ones that were chasing us, away!" The girl's hands were knuckled white now, "And then... and then..." and she began to cry once more.

Ina didn't want to hear any more and embraced the girl once again, the girl clutching the brunette's kimono and wailed her little heart out. The brunette sat there, her kimono getting wet from tears but she didn't care. What mattered the most was this little girl in her arms. And if she was right, if her parents were killed, then she had

no one left. No one else to call family. She was alone.

No.

Not nobody.

When the girl in her arms had fallen asleep again from crying, she gently placed the blunette back into the futon, with the help of Nobuyuki, and placed the blanket back on her, up to her chin. "I need to speak to everyone," Ina said sitting up straight, her eyes never leaving the girl's form.

Nodding, Nobuyuki stood up and left the two girls to go and search for his parents and brother. When he left, Ina, too, thought it best to go and leave, but not before she leant near the girl, brushed her bangs away to the side and pressed her lips against Midori's forehead. Moving her face away, the ponytailed girl stood up as well and headed for the door. Before going through it, she looked back, and as she did, she couldn't help feel sorry for the little girl.

Whatever happened to her, before she and the Sanada siblings found the blunette, had left a big impact on her mind. And whatever it was, Ina wanted to make sure that it never happened to her again. She never had siblings so she wouldn't know, but at that moment Ina felt like she was an older sister, wanting to protect her younger sister from the bad, corrupt, things in the world they were living in.

Ina gave the girl one last look before she went through the door, sliding it close behind her before the brunette left to find the Sanada family. It didn't take long though. The Sanadas where all in the master bedroom belonging to Masayuki and Yamate, and they all looked in her direction when she arrived. Excusing herself for entering the room, the ponytailed brunette went over and sat down next Nobuyuki, and when she put her hands on top of her lap, he reached out and enveloped her hand in his.

She turned her gaze to his and smiled, earning a gentle one in return and gave a slight nod. It was very reassuring to know that she wasn't alone.

"Now then," Masayuki began, bringing the close childhood friends attention back to the situation. "What was it you wanted to talk to us about, Ina?"

"Hai," Ina started, squeezing Nobuyuki's hand for reassurance and getting her's squeezed back, telling her that he was there if she needed him. The brunette thanked the silver haired boy, and then finally started to tell the older Sanada's what had happened just a moment ago with the girl.

As the events were being explained, especially the part about Midori's parents, Ina noticed that Yukimura had let a low gasp, his eyes wide and his hands were closed, knuckled white, into fists, scrunching up his jinbei pant legs. Masayuki's face was stern, listening to every detail without interruption and Yamate had put a hand to her mouth, silencing the gasp that she had let out, but carried on listening intently as Masayuki did.

When Ina finished her explanation, the entire room was silent.

Masayuki crossed his arms and closed his eyes, thinking. Yamate was staring at the ground in front of her, her hands clasped together, she too in thought. Yukimura's brows were knitted together, anger clearly shown in his eyes as he glared at the tatami mat.

And Nobuyuki and Ina were still close together, the silver haired boy wrapping his arm around the brunette, his other hand still covering hers. Ina welcomed the contact, leaning into Nobuyuki's body and leant her head on his shoulder, which got her pulled even closer in response.

"I have made a descision," Masayuki spoke suddenly, bringing everybody's attention and gazes on him. "Yamada Midori..." Masayuki's eyes opened, his gaze meeting everybody else's. "Will remain here and become part of the Sanada family, if she so wishes."

At those words, everyone's eyes began to shine and they all smiled. All except for Yukimura who looked more dumbstruck than anything.

\* \* \*

><p>Later on that night, Ina asked the Sanada's for permission to stay the night and to look after the girl, if she ever woke up. The Sanada's didn't mind but she had to make sure that she tell her father and a great friend of the Sanada's, Honda Tadakatsu, that she was. When she asked her father's permission however, he'd asked her if it had something to do with a silver haired boy and that caused the brunette to blush, profusely, and Tadakatsu laughed.<p>

When she returned to the Sanada household, with the permission from her father, Ina got right into laying out a futon next to the Midori's, whom was sleeping soundly. As she was still setting up, there was a knock on the door, followed by it being slid open, revealing a gentle, smiling Nobuyuki, and a red faced Yukimura.

"If you don't mind the company, would it be okay if we stayed here for the night as well?" Nobuyuki asked, loud enough for Ina to hear and not wake the blunette. Ina felt like she had butterflies in her stomach. It wasn't just the fact that she would be sharing a room with her crush, but the fact that these two siblings, too, cared about the girl, and quite possibly their new little sister.

Ina gave a nod in response, and the two Sanada brothers made their way into the room. Carefully, so they wouldn't wake up the sleeping little girl, Nobuyuki and Yukimura put down their futons they had brought from their respective rooms. Yukimura placed his futon at the foot of the girl's bed, and Nobuyuki took it upon himself to lay his next to Ina's, with permission of course.

Ina gave him the approval, but quickly turned herself way and got into her futon, knowing she was blushing like crazy now. Even her heart was hammering away uncontrollably!

Once everyone was settled down in their futons, and the lights of the candles were blew out, the brown haired Sanada was out first, snoring as he slept. Nobuyuki's breaths were even, so Ina assumed that he was asleep also. But for the brunette, who's hair was finally let down from the high ponytail, she couldn't sleep. Too much had happened in the day's events and hearing about what happened to Midori wasn't helping things either.

Ina shifted onto her back and stared at the ceiling, hoping that staring at it long enough would help her fall to sleep, but to no avail.

"Having trouble sleeping?" Ina jumped a little from those sudden words and turned her head in the direction they spoke from. Her eyes met Nobuyuki's, whom she thought was sleeping and he now bore an apologetic smile on his, to Ina, perfect face. "Sorry, it seems I startled you."

The brunette could feel the heat in her cheeks, and quickly turned her head away from the silver haired Sanada. "I-It's fine," Ina cursed her stuttering words. Why was it that when she was alone with him, she would embarrass herself?

"Something's bothering you, isn't there?" Nobuyuki asked, his tone of voice gentle, and the heat in Ina's cheeks had finally started to cool down. "It's about what happened today, isn't it." And that made Ina smile a little. He always seemed to know what was going on in her head. But it didn't feel intrusive at all. In fact she liked it. It made her feel that they were in sync with each other. That she was special to him.

"Hai," Ina replied, looking at the girl next to her. The girl's face was peaceful, which either meant she was having a normal dream, or she wasn't dreaming at all. She was glad though, that she didn't have to see that pained expression on her face.

The brunette then heard the sound of covers being rustled, followed by her own covers being lifted up and finally feeling a warm body and arms embracing her figure. Turning her head, her violet orbs met grey ones and they were very, very close. "N-Nobuyuki," Ina cried his name quietly. "What are-"

"I'm here for you, Ina" he spoke, interrupting the brunette mid-sentence.

Ina was surprised by Nobuyuki's declaration, but the surprised look was replaced with her smile. Nodding, Ina turned in the embrace so now she was facing the silver haired boy, both her hands placed on his chest and Nobuyuki tighten the embrace in response.

It felt like a dream at this point, and if she was, she didn't want to wake up. The boy she had a crush on, no, who she was in love with, was embracing her. That was mostly any girl's dream right? To be hugged by the person you love the most. In this position, Ina couldn't help herself. She finally wanted to convey the thoughts, the feelings that she's had since she became friends with the Sanada siblings.

"I love you," was what she said, and it felt like a huge relief saying those words out loud. "I love you, Nobuyuki." she said it once more and looked up. Her eyes met the gentle grey orbs of Nobuyuki, who was smiling down at her.

"And I love you, Ina" he said back, wrapping the brunette even tighter in his embrace. Ina welcomed it even more, tears of joy slipping down her cheeks. Her pillow was probably getting soaked but she didn't care. This moment was all that mattered.

And soon, sleep finally made it's way and Ina gladly let it take over. She knew that she was going to have pleasant dreams tonight. Being in the arms of the one she loved, and best of all, who loved her back.

### 3. Prologue Part 3

**\*\*Hey everybody, sorry for the wait. This is the final prologue chapter, which is Kunoichi's origin. I don't think I did this one very well, and I'm not very good with fighting scenes either, but this is how it ended up.\*\***

**\*\*Hope you enjoy.\*\***

**\*\*Oh and I'd like to thank my beta, SanadaJoZhao for looking at my last chapter and correcting for my mistakes and grammar.\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>Laying on top of a thick tree branch, on the highest tree in the forest, a young ninja known by everyone in her ninja clan as Kunoichi, had her hands behind her head. She was listening to her surroundings, trying to be in tune with nature. She could hear the sound of birds chirping away as they flew through the forest. She could even hear the trees rustling in the wind, the breeze being cool and pleasant of the ninja girl's face.<p>

As the leaves danced, the sun, that was high in the sky, shone through the gaps, the sun's rays hitting Kunoichi in the face. \_That feels nice\_ the girl thought to herself. She started to stretch her limbs, some joints in her bones gave a clicking sound before she relaxed once more.

Kunoichi liked this time of day, and there was nothing that could ruin this peaceful moment.

"Oi, Kunoichi!"

Maybe not.

A groan escaped Kunoichi's lips. She turned to her side and looked down to the ground. Standing there, with their arms folded, was a teenage girl with a forehead protector. She was one of her classmates as well as one of her friends, during their training to become shinobi. Mochizuki Chiyome.

The young shinobi flopped on her stomach and let her arm dangle over the edge of the branch she was lying on. "What is it, Chiyome?" the girl mumbled, tiredly. If what the girl was going to say wasn't anything important, she was going to pull a prank on her. Maybe something with a cold bucket of water on top of her room door.

"Kai-Ojiisan wants to speak to you," the Chiyome said, somehow managing to hear what the brown haired girl had asked.

Just with the mere mention of their elders name, Kunoichi shot up, a big smile was plastered on her face. She then disappeared in a

whirlwind of cherry blossoms and then reappeared before the other girl. "Ojiichan!" Kunoichi shouted out excitedly. Her eyes sparkled. She loved the man to bits. It was thanks to him that she was what she was today. "What did he say!?" she asked her, her face getting up close to Chiyome's.

"I-I don't know," the ninja girl replied, recoiling slightly, her personal space having been invaded. "He just wanted to-"

Kunoichi didn't give the her friend time to finish as she quickly moved away from her and jumped up into a tree. She then leapt to another tree branch and did the same thing again to another. Her classmate shouted at her, but she couldn't care less about what she was saying, and continued on toward her village hidden in the forest.

\* \* \*

><p>Amnesia.<p>

That was what Kunoichi had when she first set foot in the village of the ninjas. She couldn't remember the details, but the people that had found the young girl told her that she was lying on the floor on the forest grounds, and with a high fever. It was raining on that day, so she was soaked through and even for ninja, who should try and separate their emotions from their duty, they couldn't leave her there and let the dangerous wildlife take her.

The ninja's on patrol that day had taking the girl back to their village and brought her to the village's, as well as the shinobi's, elder and leader, Old man Kai.

When the young girl woke up the next day, frightened at not knowing where she was, Kai was the first person she saw. She was terrified at that point. Her little mind was wondering who this strange old man was, and even wondered what he was going to do with her.

But the old man just smiled, looking glad that she had woken up. Without saying a word, the old man got up and disappeared into a room. Not a moment later, he came back with a wooden tray in hand and made his way toward the little brown haired girl. \_"You must be hungry and thirsty?"\_ the old man asked, kneeling next to the girl.

The old man put the tray down in front of the scared girl. When he did that, he sat back down and remained quiet.

The girl looked at him for a moment, before her gaze turned toward the tray. On it was a plate with a few loaves of bread and a cup of water. Just looking at it made saliva gather up in the girl's mouth and then a loud growl suddenly echoed within the walls of the house.

The young girl's eyes widened and her cheeks quickly became rosy red. The old man laughed at how hungry the child was and when he did, the brunette's eyes started to form tears from the embarrassment. Just when the water works were about to happen, the girl felt a large, warm hand placed on her head and it began to pet her.

Looking up her gaze met that of the old man's. His eyes were gentle



and that was then she knew that she was in no danger from him. \_"It's all right,"\_ the old man said. \_"Eat. There's no need to be shy."\_

With those words, the girl's tearful gaze went back to the tray of bread near her. She picked up the bread with her two hands and bit into it. After the first bite went down her throat, her hunger took over. She scarfed down the rest of the bread and then went on to the next one. She didn't know but it was obviously a long time since she last ate.

When she got into her third one, she began to choke. She hit her chest a few times, hoping it would go down, but when it didn't, she reached for the cup of water and downed it in one gulp. Moving the cup away from her lips, the little girl let out sigh of relief, and began eating again, only this time she opted for smaller bites. The old man chuckled to himself as he watched the girl's antics, and started to talk to her when she began to eat sensibly.

\_"What is your name young one?"\_ he asked her.

The girl suddenly stopped mid-chew, and lowered the bread, her gaze downcast. \_"I don't know,"\_ she replied. \_"I can't remember."\_

The girl now looked miserable. The old man that she doesn't know had been showing him kindness, and she couldn't even tell him her own name. She might be young, but she knew when she should show gratitude.

Old man Kai, hummed to himself, stroking the beard on his chin. \_"I see,"\_ he spoke, the girl still looking at the half-eaten bread in her hands. There was silence between the two, an uncomfortable one for the girl. \_"Kunoichi."\_ Until the old man broke it with a name. The girl looked up from the bread and into the old man's kind eyes.

\_"Kuno...ichi..."\_ the girl repeated.

\_"That's right,"\_ he said. \_"If you so wish it, that can be your name until you can remember who you are."\_

The little girl stared at the man with wide eyes, then looked back at her half-eaten bread. \_"Kunoichi,"\_ the girl said the name. \_"Kunoichi"\_ she said once more, this time a small smile appearing on her face.

\* \* \*

><p>Kunoichi stopped her reminiscing as she got closer to the village, but she would never forget that day. From that day forward, she had remained in this village hidden in the forest waiting for her memories to come back. They hadn't however, but Kunoichi didn't care. She didn't care if they didn't come back at all. The young ninja was enjoying her life now, so there was no need to any more. But if they did come back, she would deal with it then.<p>

Jumping from the last tree she was on, Kunoichi landed before the gates of her village which had two guards posted in front of it. Walking toward it, she greeted the two guards with a cheeky grin and they greeted her in return before she walked past them.

She took in the scenery as she made her way to old man Kai's house. She could hear some little kids, probably future shinobi when they grow up, playing about with one another, having the time of their lives. She smiles at this. She remembers the time when she was the same as those children, playing with Chiyome and the other kids her age. She even played with old man Kai before he couldn't do it any more.

Like the guards posted outside, the village people, too, greeted the young ninja as they passed her by, smiles on their faces. She remembers some of them from the village mission's she would receive from the villagers themselves.

She finally went up stone steps, which lead to her destination. On top of the stone steps there was a big house in width, and as Kunoichi made her way to the front sliding door, reaching for it, the door slid open suddenly, making the ninja girl jump. Standing on the other side of the door was a tall man with extremely pale skin, his hair was tied in a high, ponytailed dreadlocks and his sharp, piercing sky blue eyes were boring into her hazel ones.

Kunoichi knew who this man was. Everyone in this village probably knew who this he was. His methods of teaching the new shinobi was ruthless. Some young ninjas either, wouldn't even survive his training or if they did, they would be critically injured, and they couldn't be a ninja any more.

Fuma Kotaro.

"Kotaro-sensei," Kunoichi whispered. Her blood suddenly went cold as he stared at her with those piercing eyes. She really wanted to run away.

"Kunoichi," Kotaro called her name, and that sent a chill down the shinobi girl's spine. She couldn't put her finger on it but something about this man rubbed her the wrong way. "What is the prodical shinobi girl doing here?"

"Ojiichan wanted to see me," she replied, somehow managing to gain back her composure.

Kotaro stared at, in his case, the little girl for a bit longer before he closed his eyes. And with a "Hmph" the dreadlocked ninja walked past Kunoichi, a slight menacing aura leaving with him. When he finally left, Kunoichi suddenly let out a breath she hadn't realized she had been holding. That was terrifying Kunoichi thought. She finally remembered what she was here for. Don't want to keep the Ojiichan waiting. With that thought she went through the already open door and closed it.

Venturing further in and opening a few more sliding doors, Kunoichi finally made her way into the living area of the building. When she announced herself through the paper door, she got a reply, telling her to come in and she slid the door open.

Inside she saw the old man sitting in front of a fireplace, drinking tea and when he turned to face the young girl, she noticed that he had a bit of a solemn face before it quickly disappeared, like it hadn't been there in the first place. "Ah, Kunoichi!" old man Kai

exclaimed, smiling at her.

She stepped in and closed the door behind her, turning back around when she finished. "You wanted to see me, Ojiichan" she asked. The old man however looked a bit disappointed.

"You don't have to be so formal with me," he spoke, opening his arms wide. "Come here."

Kunoichi was a little surprised, but she smiled never-the-less and went to his open arms. When she was close enough to him, he wrapped his arms around her still growing frame and held her tight. "I miss this sometimes," Kai spoke, bringing the girl closer to him. "When you were a little girl, and living here, you would always come to my room in the middle of the night and ask me if you could sleep with me. Even during the day you would hug me. But now..."

Kunoichi remembered those times. When she would have a nightmare of random things like a monster coming to get her, she'd wake up, frightened, and head to old man Kai's room. He would always smile at her when she told him about having a nightmare, and she would always ask if she could stay with him for the rest of the night, to which he would let her.

She would cuddle with him all night and the nightmares that she had wouldn't come back. But like he said, she rarely does that now. Ever since she got her own home and been on many missions for days on end, the young girl rarely had any time for Kai. "I miss this too," Kunoichi spoke softly, old man Kai nodding in response.

They both remained in a comfortable silence for a while, just sitting there in their embrace. But soon, Kai tapped the young girl's back and they both moved away from each other. Kunoichi spoke, getting back to the matter at hand. "So what was it you wanted me for?"

"Ah," Kai replied with a noise, almost forgetting. He moved away from the girl and made his way to an Ottoman storage on the other side of the room, and opened it. He took a box and walked back to Kunoichi. "Here," he said, handing the box to the shinobi girl.

Her gaze turned to the box that was handed to her. It was a simple wooden box with the this village's shinobi crest on top of it; a four pointed shuriken with a lined circle in the background, the word ninja written in kanji in the middle of the shuriken.

Her eyes turned to the old man's, asking with her eyes to open it. He nodded in response and with that, turned her gaze back to the box and removed the lid. Inside, laying on top of a red cushion, where a pair of daggers. The dagger's blades were long and curved. It had two points sticking out from the blade; one near the hilt and another near the middle.

"Those daggers are called Kushinada," Kai said, the girl taking out one of the daggers and bringing up into the air for inspection. "It is said the goddess, who the blade is named after, had shape changed into those blades."

The brunette put the box down and took the other blade out from within the box, taking a few steps back. She then proceeded to strike

the air a few times, getting the feel of the weapons. She finished with twirling the daggers through her fingers before ending it with a jump in the air, twisting her body and striking the air with a horizontal slash, landing on one knee.

Old man Kai began to clap at Kunoichi's little performance. The brunette's eyes quickly widened when she heard the clap and she quickly stood up, putting the daggers close to her chest. She could feel herself blushing from embarrassment. She got into it so much she forgot that she was with company. \_How embarrassing!\_

A big warm hand on her shoulder brought her cheeks back to a cool level and she looked at the owner of said hand. "This dagger has been passed on through generations of great shinobi," he said, and then smiled. "Now it's being passed on to another." The brunette let a small gasp. Kai wasn't finished however and continued. "You might not be blood related, but to me you are like a precious daughter. And when I pass on, Kunoichi..." Kai's eyes bore into Kunoichi's hazel orbs. What he said to her next, took her by complete surprise. "I want you to be head of this village and it's ninja."

She wasn't expecting this. It was one thing being giving the daggers from past ninja's, but becoming head of the village and ninja, that was a huge responsibility on her shoulders. "S-Sensei, I..."

"You don't have to give me an answer now," Kai said, trying to ease the girl's mind, which was probably handling a lot of information at once. "Why don't you think it over."

Kunoichi lowered her gaze and gave a nod. She needed time to think. This was a big deal for the village and her future. She put the daggers gently back into the wooden box and picked it up. She turned her back to Kai, said a quick goodbye and began to leave.

Kai sighed out loud. He wondered if it was too soon to tell her all that. \_It's too late now\_ was what he thought.

However, as Kunoichi was leaving the big house and the old man was drinking his lukewarm tea once more, neither knew of the shadowed figure that had been listening in to the conversation between the master and student. And the old man never heard them leave as they finished.

\* \* \*

><p>It was the middle of the night and the brown haired ninja girl was laying on her bed, her hands behind her head. She was staring at the ceiling, hoping that it would help give her the answers she was looking for. But it didn't. Her thoughts kept on going back to the conversation she had with old man Kai.<p>

\_ "You might not be blood related, but to me you are like a precious daughter. And when I pass on, Kunoichi..." Kai's eyes bore into Kunoichi's hazel eyes. What he said to her next, took by complete surprise. "I want you to be head of this village and it's ninja." \_

Even now, what he told her was still shocking to the young girl. \_Me, the village head\_ she thought. Never in her life so far did she think this would happen to her. She thought she was always going to be a

ninja, even lose her life as a ninja should. But this wasn't what she expected her life to lead. \_I don't know what to do.\_

Kunoichi's thoughts however were interrupted with screams. Furrowing her brows, the young ninja sat up and the first thing she noticed was that it was suddenly bright. \_What's going on?\_ Kunoichi stood up and walked to her closed window. Opening it, she was suddenly met with heat and bright light. She covered her face with her arm, looking away, before gazing back to see what was going on.

Her eyes went wide as saucers, her arm going back down, as she saw a horrific scene. The heat was coming from a huge fire, and the fire's origin was coming from the elder's house. \_Ojiichan!\_ the girl screamed in her thoughts.

Quickly she went back in and headed toward the box containing Kushinada. Grabbing the pair of daggers and holstering them on her belt, the brunette went back to her window and jumped out. She landed on a roof of another house and proceeded to do the same to another.

She soon landed in front of the steps leading to old man Kai's house, which was surrounded by many civilians, guards and ninjas of the village. The brunette went to one of the guards who were blocking access to the house. "What happened?!" she asked him, her voice panicked. "Where's Kai-ojiichan?!"

The guard looked at Kunoichi, seeing the fear in her eyes. "He's still in the house," he told her. "With the way the fire's spreading, there is no way we can get near it." He looked behind him, the sound of wood starting to crack from the pressure of heat. "Some of the ninja who know water techniques are trying to lower the flames. We've sent the rest to get water from the lake."

Kunoichi's brows knitted closer together. The ninja's trying to douse the flames with water weren't getting anywhere, and who knows how long it would take for the other ninjas to get back. By the time the flames would be extinguished, it would be too late. \_I'm not going to let that happen!\_

Without thinking, except the safety of their leader, master and most importantly, to her, father, Kunoichi jumped over the guards blocking the path and headed for the scorching house. The guards shouted at her, telling her to come back but she didn't listen.

The shinobi girl then went through one of the ninja's water techniques, soaking her in water, and she went into the burning building before anyone could stop her.

When she entered, Kunoichi had to ask herself if this was what hell was like. Even with her body drenched in water, the heat was still unbearable but she knew that she couldn't give up. She went in further, avoiding any falling debris along the way until she got to where Kai would normally be. "Ojiichan!" Kunoichi shouted, hoping her voice would be able to reach over the flames' wrath. When she didn't get a reply, she went in further calling out his name again.

When there was still no reply, Kunoichi was fearing the worst. But she didn't stop. She hoped that he would answer. He had to answer. Just as she was about to call his name again, she finally saw

something. Someone. She started to smile and moved faster.  
"Ojiichan!"

The figure turned its head slightly, responding to the girl's voice. When she saw that, she knew that she had to get closer. She was about to call out his name once more, but she stopped mid-sentence. Her eyes widened so much that if someone saw, they would think they would pop out of their sockets.

Standing there, just a few feet away from her was someone she was not expecting. "What's wrong shinobi prodigy?" He was the last person she wanted to see. "You look surprised." Even with the flames, Kunoichi could still see his pale flesh, his red headed dreadlocks and most of all, those terrifyingly piercing sky blue eyes.

"Kotaro... sensei..." Kunoichi whispered. "What..."

Kotaro probably knew what she was going to ask. He smiled and turned his body and Kunoichi's voice got stuck in her throat. Kotaro's hand was gripping old man Kai's throat, dangling him in the air. "Ojiichan!" the brunette cried out his name. The old man opened up one eye and looked into Kunoichi's.

"Run... Kunoichi..." he could just breathe out. "Get... out of... here..." Kai then bore a pained expression on his face as Kotaro tightened his grip.

"Ojiichan!" Kunoichi turned her gaze to Kotaro and glared him. "Kotaro-sensei, what are you doing to Ojiichan?! Did you start this fire?!"

"I have no obligation to answer you," Kotaro replied, his voice still calm, even though he was surrounded by flames. "But I will tell you this. The path that you follow will come to an end." His smile then grew even more wicked. "Starting with..." his eyes turned to the old man in his grip, "...you."

Just by that look, Kunoichi knew what the pale man was going to do. "STOOOOOOOP!"

\_CRACK!\_

The sound of a bone snapping echoed, loud through the flames. Kunoichi's eyes were now really wide as they watched, in horror, Kai, the man who saved her, brought her up, and treated her like a daughter, dangling in Kotaro's grip, unmoving. Satisfied, Kotaro released the now dead elder of the village, and he fell onto the floor.

Old man Kai, leader of the village, of the shinobi and, to her, someone she called a father, was dead. Dead. Gone. No longer in this world. Coming to this realization, Kunoichi's blood started to boil with anger. Hatred. She hated this man. She hated Kotaro-sensei, no, he was now just Kotaro to her. She was going to kill him. She was going to \_murder\_ him.

Kunoichi reached for her holstered blades quickly, and with incredible speed, she charged at the traitor, full of hate. "KOOOTARRROOO!" Kunoichi screamed, tears coming out from her eyes as

she swung her new blades at the older ninja. He just smiled and as the blades made their way toward him, he suddenly disappeared and they struck nothing but air.

Landing, Kunoichi looked around the around the burning building, trying to sense the other ninja's location. "Come out Kotaro!"

"I'm over here," his voice came from behind her. When she looked, he was standing where she was only a moment ago.

"Come and face me you coward!"

The dreadlocked ninja ignored what Kunoichi said and smiled. "I'd love to play with you," he said, "but unfortunately I must be going." He turned his back on the young girl and slowly started to walk away.

"Oi, you bastard!" Kunoichi screamed. Kotaro stopped his movement, and turned his head slightly, indicating he was listening. "Where the hell do you think you're going?!"

"If I were you, I'd be worrying more about yourself," was all he said before he faced forward and continued to walk. The brunette shouted at him, cursed at him, but the ninja didn't stop this time and soon vanished through the flames.

Kunoichi was about to chase after him, but one of the wooden supports fell in front of the girl, stopping her in her tracks. \_Damn it!\_ Kunoichi knew she couldn't just let him get away. But she had to get out of the building first.

Putting the blades back in their holsters, the girl turned to the dead old man. Her eyes saddened but she knelt down on one knee. Kunoichi put her arms underneath the dead man's shoulders and knees and made her way to the entrance of the once elders house.

The air felt nice as she left the burning building. When she was a safe distance away, she put Kai's body down on the floor gently, like a fragile object that could break easily. The ninjas had stopped applying water to the fire and the guards that had blocked the civilians, came to the girl.

When the guard that tried to stop the girl before asked what happened, she didn't answer. She didn't need to. When they all looked at the corpse, sudden realization hit them. "Kami-sama," the guard said, also saying what the others were probably thinking.

Slowly, her eyes showing no emotion, Kunoichi stood up. \_I'm sorry, Ojiichan\_ the girl apologised in her thoughts. \_If only I was fast enough!\_ The young shinobi clenched her hands into white knuckled fists, her finger nails digging into her palms. She didn't care that her hands slowly started to bleed. What she did care about was killing the bastard who did this.

As if right on cue, Kunoichi felt like she was being watched. Looking up, from a fair distance away, she saw the very man responsible for all of this, standing on a rooftop. Suddenly the eyes that held no emotion, now only showed one. Hatred. Burning Hatred.

From the distance, she saw the older ninja smile and then turned,

jumping away from the village. \_You're not getting away this time!\_ With that thought, Kunoichi, not caring about anything at this point, jumped away from the crowd that appeared. She landed on the rooftop that Kotaro had been standing on just before and she could see the other ninja near the gate.

Her hatred past it's breaking point, she jumped onto another rooftop and then another. When she finally got the gate, she could no longer visually see Kotaro. \_Where is he?\_ she looked around with her eyes but she couldn't see anything. \_If that's the case\_ Kunoichi closed her eyes and listened. She tried to hear anything that was disrupting the forest.

There was nothing, so she tried to listen even further. Doing that she was able to pick up a sound. A sound of someone landing on branches, which snapped some twigs. \_There!\_ She instantly went to action and jumped onto one of the thick branches.

She jumped from one branch to another, increasing her speed so she good catch up to him. \_Kill... Kill... Kill...\_ That was the only word going through Kunoichi's head. She had to kill him. No. She wanted to kill him. No. She needed to kill him. She needed the satisfaction of ending the older ninja's life. To feel his life leave his body.

After a few minutes of leaping through trees, Kunoichi saw plains ahead. Jumping from her last tree branch, the brunette landed on the patch of grass and in front of her, with his back turned to her, was Kotaro. The way it looked, it was like he was waiting for her.

"Kotaro!" the shinobi girl shouted his name. "You're going to pay for what you did!"

The pale ninja slowly turned his body around, facing Kunoichi and he wore a smile on his face. "If so," he began, spreading out his arms, wide. "Then come at me."

Kunoichi's eyes narrowed, her teeth clenched. "You..." This man was mocking her. It made her feel weak. That was a big mistake. "BASTARD!"

Releasing her daggers from their holsters, Kunoichi began to charge at the red headed ninja, her hatred for the man fuelling her. The man continued to just stand there as the girl got closer. And when she was close enough she disappeared in front of him, cherry blossom petals falling from where she had been. She then reappeared behind Kotaro, her blades already in mid-swing. She was going to end this in one blow!

Or so she thought.

Just as the blades were about to come in contact with the man's pale head, her Kushinada met something solid. His gauntlet. \_Wha-?!\_ Kunoichi never got to finish that thought however.

Kotaro turned his head, his piercing eyes looking into Kunoichi's and with a wicked smile, he gripped the girl's wrist and threw her over his shoulder. She let out a little scream from being thrown, but Kotaro wasn't done. As she came down in front of him, he let his grip



of the girl go and kicked her in the abdomen, hard.

Saliva, mixed with a bit of blood, flew out from her mouth as she was sent sailing into the ground. She rolled backwards a few times but she dug one of her daggers into the ground and managed to stop herself. She started to breath quite hard, the blow she took literally took her breath away. She used the back of her hand to wipe her mouth. \_What strength.\_

"If that's all you have, then you shouldn't even be called a ninja," Kotaro said mockingly.

"Shut up!"

Kunoichi again charged straight on, and this time Kotaro, too, began to run towards the girl. When the two got close, Kunoichi, again, made the first move by swinging her blade at the older shinobi. It got the same result, Kotaro using his gauntlet to block the sharp metal. \_Not yet!\_ Quickly, the shinobi girl jumped up and somersaulted in mid-air, performing a horizontal downward kick upon Kotaro's head.

Kotaro was able to block with ease with his other hand, grabbing the heel of the girl's foot. "Tch," Kunoichi made a noise of disappointment, but she refused to give up. Using her other foot, the girl pushed against the older shinobi, causing her to do a back flip, land crouching on the floor and made an attempt to sweep his legs from underneath him.

He jumped, in time with Kunoichi's leg sweep, over the younger ninja landing behind his foe. As soon as he landed, he twisted his body slightly and quickly raised his gauntlet to defend against the blade from the young girl. They were close. Kotaro could see the hate in the girl's eyes, and he found it amusing.

"I have to admit your skills are admirable," he said. "You have survived longer than any of my students had." Kunoichi narrowed her eyes, her glare and hate intensifying. She didn't want a compliment, especially from this man. "But unfortunately for you, it's not enough. I think it's time to end this little game."

And true to his word, he did. Pushing away the blade using his gauntlet, Kunoichi staggered, her eyes wide with surprise. He then punched her in the abdomen once more, saliva again spilling from her mouth. He then continued his assault by hitting Kunoichi in the face with a roundhouse kick. The kick caused the girl to fall back, her face contorting in pain but she wouldn't be getting a rest.

The next thing the girl felt was a knee to the spine, making her arch her back and finally Kotaro clasped his hands together and swung down, like a sledgehammer, on Kunoichi's chest. The shinobi girl came crashing down to the ground, the grass doing a poor job of cushioning the blow of hitting the floor.

Kotaro looked down the broken girl. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing roughly, a bit of blood had come out from her mouth. He closed his eyes, muttering the word "Pathetic" before he opened them again. He reached down and gripped the brunette's throat, lifting her up like he did with Kai. The girl managed to open one eye, and even in the state and situation she was in, she still managed to glare at

Kotaro. "I won't kill you," he stated. The girl was on the verge of being unconscious. "I'll let you live, with the disgrace of not avenging your master. I'll be in your nightmares when you go to sleep at night."

His mouth curved on one side. "Sleep well Kunoichi and when you become strong enough, you will come find me, and take your revenge." Those were the last words she heard and his smirk was the last thing she saw before everything became dark.

\* \* \*

><p>Today was the day of the funeral for their beloved leader. Everyone would be wearing their black kimono's and head off to were old man Kai used to live. Villagers, the guards and the other shinobi would all be paying their respects for a great man. Or that's what Kunoichi thought would be going on. Instead of being out there with the rest of her village, she chose not to. She felt that she didn't deserve to near the man who practically raised her.<p>

After she blacked out during her fight with Kotaro, she had woken up the next day in her bed. According to Chiyome, who was with Kunoichi when she awoke, the ninja from the village, once they had finished putting out the fire, had found the ninja girl laying on the grass, badly beaten. And there had been no sign of Fuma Kotaro anywhere. Which was why she was packing some of her things into a travelling bag.

As she did, she felt a presence behind her, but she didn't bother turning around to speak to them because she knew who it was. "You're going to look for him aren't you?" Chiyome asked, leaning on the open doorway.

"I have to," Kunoichi said, not stopping at what she was doing.

"No you don't," Chiyome replied, irritation in her voice. "It wasn't your fault that old man Kai died."

Kunoichi didn't believe that one bit. "If only if I was faster or stronger, maybe--"

"What? Maybe you could saved him?" Chiyome spoke back, finishing off Kunoichi's sentence. "Kunoichi, listen. What happened wasn't your fault--"

"Yes it was!" Kunoichi screamed, slamming down whatever was in her hand. Chiyome was taken aback by her action but Kunoichi didn't take notice. She turned and faced her friend, tears threatening to fall from her face. "You weren't there when it happened! You weren't the one who just stood there and watched as someone you cared about die before your very eyes!"

The tears that the brunette held in started to fall from her eyes in an instant. She slowly slumped to the ground, the tears hitting the wooden floor as new tears grew. "I couldn't save him... I couldn't..." Chiyome really couldn't see this any more. Her friend, who was normally hyperactive in this village was now crying her eyes out. She went toward the brunette and wrapped her in a embrace.

Kunoichi at that point wailed her heart out. She could finally cry for the man she could proudly call father, and she wasn't going to stop until she let it all out.

After a bit of time pass Kunoichi's sobs soon became just hiccups. "Sorry Chiyome," she apologised, " and thanks."

Chiyome just shook her head and smiled. "It's fine Kunoichi," she replied. She then stood up, gripping Kunoichi's hands. "Come on, let's go to the funeral, and say our final goodbyes."

Kunoichi nodded. "I'll be right behind you. I just need to look presentable," the brunette smiled at her friend. Chiyome returned the gesture and headed through the door. \_I'm sorry\_ \_Chiyome\_ Kunoichi thought but finished out loud. "And goodbye."

Chiyome heard that last part and stopped, turned on her heel and ran back into the house. She shouted Kunoichi's name, but when she got back, Kunoichi had disappeared.

End  
file.